

INTERIM

VOLUME 2

1946

NUMBER 2

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The death of James Franklin Lewis in Kansas City on October 26, 1945 was a loss to American poetry, which will be felt more keenly as time passes. No man in America gave more of himself for the younger poet, nor did any man have more knowledge of the directions of our literature as indicated by the work of the younger poet here and abroad. Derisive of facility as the chief criterion of poetic creation, Lewis asked for a poetry of the heart in the tradition of Whitman and Crane.

It is not maudlin to say that his life symbolized the harmony of creative action. He continuously fought political, educational, and especially artistic reaction. In the comparative poverty foisted upon him by hollow voices he remained true to the spiritual currents of strength within him.

The editors of Interim especially are in debt to Frank Lewis. It was he who encouraged the magazine during the days when it was attempting to define itself. Analyzation of his life and work will appear later on these and other pages. For now we can but recognize the greatness of the obligation which he has placed in our hands.

A. W. S.

GRANT H. REDFORD—The Trial

No one questioned that Frank Potter had killed his sister. But there was a sharp difference of opinion whether he should hang. The trial split our town like a butcher divides a chicken. You might think the case would have been easy if you had stood in the hall of his big frame house and had seen the blood all over the floor and on the staircase and had seen the broken shape of his sister lying there for all the world like a corpse at Dachau.

One woman remarked darkly that "Hangin' is too good for him." She didn't say it loudly seeing as how she was standing where death had battered through the somber hall where no one goes now except to stare and shake his head and mutter about evil and violence and how it isn't fitting to our little town. Yes, you might think the case would have been easy.

But Frank Potter was a gentle man. He was about the last person you'd expect to murder someone. He would stop and chat with any child. True, he didn't make over children but in a friendly distant way he flattered them with talk they liked. No one ever heard him loud or arrogant. He seemed to want to please, but not too much. We were shocked, I can tell you.

The morning of the violent killing, Potter went running down the street in the quiet gray of dawn before anyone but Hebe Larson delivering milk was out of bed; though of course smoke went up from a few small houses where industry roused or habit directed. He went running down the empty street slowly, like a big lumbering dog half-heartedly hoping he might stumble on to a rewarding scent of food. Hebe crossed in front of him with two quarts of milk for Holt's more than half a mile from Potter's.

"What gets you up, Frank?" he called with as much friendliness as one ever uses on a man who had kept himself as much to himself as Potter had done for the five years he'd lived in our town. Potter didn't answer, nor did he appear to have heard or seen.

"Going somewhere?" Hebe called as Potter trotted past.

Hebe is a friend of mine and told me about it. But it doesn't matter. He told it the first day of the trial and everyone in the little court room nodded vigorously because we'd heard the story a dozen times during the days before the trial began. I don't know how you find it, but in our part of the country a man can grow almost gray-bearded waiting for the courts to get around to trying a case. I heard tell of a chap once who died in jail and had been buried six months when they got around to trying him on a charge of robbery! Yes, sir.

Well, Hebe could see something was wrong so he put the two quarts on Halt's porch and caught up with Potter almost a block away. "Hey, what's up?" he called and pulled his light yellow truck with its green lettering over to the walk where Potter would have to pass. He stepped out to intercept that head-down trotting. Potter would have run right into him if he hadn't grabbed him.

"What's up?" Hebe said.

Potter stopped and looked up. He didn't act as if he'd ever seen Hebe. "There was nothing else I could do," he said.

"Are you drunk, Frank?" Hebe asked as he studied that round fleshy face that hung over his body like a face pointed on bread dough.

If he heard Hebe, he didn't make out that way. "There was nothing else I could do. I had to kill her."

"What?" shouted Hebe.

"If only she hadn't broken her chain. Or had stayed in her room. But what else could I do? I had to kill her. You don't know how it's been—for years."

"My God, man, you are drunk. Here, get in the truck and I'll run you home."

It was then that Potter came alive. Hebe says he reared back, blood rushed into his face, and he yelled, "No. Don't take me back there. No.!"

A car started and then came backing out across the street. Someone was going to work without a thought of that woman lying dead in Potter's front hall. Hebe, nor none of us, knew about his sister. It's no wonder Hebe couldn't make heads nor tails of what Frank was saying.

My wife once said to me, "Is there somebody living upstairs in Potter's house?" Now she knew as much about it as I did so her question didn't require an answer. She was looking out our kitchen window toward the back of his house. You see, our lot backs against his in the middle of the block. His house faces east and ours faces west.

My wife asked me again.

"Of course not," I said. "No one but Frank has been living there for nearly five years," I reminded her.

"I keep thinking I hear something. When I'm in the back part of the garden once in a while. I asked Priscilla next door."

"You women," I shrugged.

And do you know what? Both my wife and Priscilla White went on the stand and testified they had heard someone up in the back upstairs room of Potter's house. But the interesting thing is they took opposite sides on whether he should hang.

Well, after Hebe saw how Potter reacted to going home, he said, "What the hell's the trouble, Frank?"

Frank paused. He was a sick man all right. "Take me down to the jail, Hebe. I wanta be locked up. I just killed my sister."

"Your sister, Frank, I didn't know you had a sister. When did she come?"

"Will you take me down, Hebe?"

"Sure, but . . ."

"Thanks." And the way he said it put a stop to Hebe's questions.

The state papers had just come when they got to the jail and Harry Lund, the custodian, was reading one. Harry calls himself the warden, though he rarely has more than two prisoners and usually not any.

"By golly, Hebe," he said hardly looking up, "I'm glad they're going to make those murdering Nazis answer for their crimes."

"I haven't time to talk about it, Harry. Here's a prisoner for you."

"The hell you say," said Harry looking up. "Ye gods, not Frank Potter. He wouldn't pull anything."

Hebe was late with his milk deliveries, and he got later at almost every stop.

"My goodness, Hebe, don't you know we need this milk for breakfast?" complained Mrs. Jones.

"Sorry to be late, Mrs. Jones. But I just dropped Frank Potter at the jail. He just killed his sister."

"He what?" she cried and squinted up her face.

Hebe told her what he knew.

"You mean this milk was sitting there in that truck while a murderer rode down town with you?"

"He didn't touch the milk, Mrs. Jones."

"Good heavens," she shouted and ran in to tell Mr. Jones.

"The old Biddie," Hebe said to me later. "She's always kicking about the milk."

Wade Elliot, the chief of police, got Doc Samuels and went to the Potter house and told us to clear out. "The law is taking over," he said loudly.

If we hadn't seen the woman lying there with her thin gray hair matted and disordered in the dark of her blood we would have laughed at Wade. He was plenty nervous. The only other murder he'd seen was a rancher way out in the wilds. He was a deputy sheriff then. At the Potter's he wasn't prepared for what he saw. "Good Lord," he said.

Doc Samuels was more accustomed to broken bodies, even perhaps to bodies wasted and ghastly as hers.

"Potter must have been pitifully afraid," Doc said.

"How come?" asked the Chief.

"He continued to hit her after she was dead."

Those of us who had looked at her before they had come agreed. It was not pretty.

"What was he afraid of?" someone asked.

"Who can tell?" said Doc quietly. He was mighty impressed in spite of how much he may have seen of pain and hunger and misery.

"Don't bother us, folks!" said the Chief. "We've got a lot of work to do."

"Will they hang him?" somebody asked. It sounded like Mrs. Jones.

"How should I know," said Wade irritably. "I'm not the judge."

"Well, what do you think?" It was Mrs. Jones. Her breakfast must have been less important than she'd made out to Hebe.

"Mrs. Jones, all this will come out at the trial. We will have to wait and see."

Potter was being tried then, and had been since early morning when the word began bouncing and rippling over the telephone and in kitchens.

"For the last time, folks, I'm asking you to go away and let us make our checkup," ordered the Chief.

As I said, the trial had begun that morning. Right then sides were taken. Those of us in town and, later in the day, all over the state and beyond were shaken by the terror and degradation which seized upon us. Mrs. Charles took one look, then hurried away to vomit behind a bush.

Sickness and anger and fear, and wonder that in our time, in our town such things could happen, seized upon us.

Just like a butcher's cleaver smashing through the bones of a chicken leaving splinters of bone and wet flesh, that is how it was in our town after that killing. Though we all talked of Potter and the terrible cruelty of holding his sister chained to the iron bed in his back upstairs bedroom, we looked at each other and into dark houses where trees settled around, and we saw fear. And as the fear grew in us—though we never talked of this—we wanted to do violent things.

"That son-of-a-bitch should be lynched," Dave Peters said one day about a week after the murder in the Atlas Pool Hall where the balls rolled violently from his smashing opener. The retort of the balls was as guns and each of us toyed with the idea of murder.

"I'll never feel right till he's underground," said Neal Simpson.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" challenged Stubby Hansen. "What are we waiting for?"

Everyone was aching to topple something over or fracture something with a great blow. But there was no tradition for lynching in our state and no one knew how to go about it.

"We're waiting for you," snapped Dave Peters again. "You're always shooting off about something."

"The hell I am," bristled Stubby.

"Go on clear freight," said Dave and he walked toward Stubby.

We held our breaths. Our muscles tensed and ached for release. We hoped Stubby would stay his ground. We wanted to see blood dripping. We wanted to hear flesh bruised. We waited, hoping. But Stubby spat a stream of tobacco into the sandbox and turned away. "To hell with you," he said.

Our muscles relaxed, but we were unfulfilled. The game went on, and the talk, but about general things. It was almost as if we had voted not to talk about Potter; as if we didn't trust ourselves. And we didn't. There underneath our talk was violence, was ourselves looking at the unaccustomed places of our hate and insecurity, and, yes, I suppose, vengeance. We were roused from the sleeping routine of our petty days, and we were ashamed and angered.

"Jesus Christ!" cursed Dave Peters so violently he set the hair on our necks. Tod Daly, the Atlas manager, called down from the front.

"Soft pedal it, Peters. Where the hell you think you are, at home?"

Dave didn't answer, only waited stolidly for his turn to shoot. He'd just muffed one. Then he shot again—the eleven for a set-up in the corner pocket and an easy run from there on—and he missed. He yelled, and at the same time smashed his cue stick over the edge of the table. "By God," he swore and started laughing loudly.

"What you trying to pull?" called Tod.

"Who cares?" challenged Dave as he threw a bill on the counter.

"Well, if you don't know how to act, stay outa here."

"I know how to act," said Dave without inflection. And he walked out laughing. None of the rest of us laughed. We just sat there. But in an unsatisfied way we were relieved, momentarily.

The most disturbing information we learned at the trial was that Potter had kept his sister chained to her bed for the five years he's been living in our town. Kept her chained for her own good, to protect them both, he explained carefully. He killed her when she broke loose. She had come creeping down the stair holding her broken chain in her hands. Who knows, maybe the chain slipped from her thin fingers, resounded against the stair, or perhaps only a step creaked and the sharp sound cut through the dim haze of sleep which curtailed Potter from wakefulness. Fear which companioned him must have noted any sound and thrust it into him. Maybe she crept down the worn and uncarpeted stairs, across the hall and into his room intent on killing him, as he said.

We found her there in the hall outside his room. The pick handle darkened with its fragments of death lying a little way away near the front door through which he had run, as if to run would deny his deed.

My wife was triumphant when she heard that he had kept his sister chained to her bed. "I told you so," her eyes told me as we sat in the packed court room.

My wife had been hearing that thin gray ghost sawing the chain back and forth on the iron bed post. His sister was sly, Potter admitted. She sawed only when she thought he was away. If he heard her sawing away at her bonds, he was forced to "discipline" her, he said. Asked to explain "discipline," he hesitantly outlined the use he made of the long buggy whip found in her barren room. There was a rumbling and a rippling which almost bulged the small hot court room that day. Mrs. Charles fainted and the judge stopped everything until she was taken out. "Order in the court," he commanded as soon as he could because he feared we might swarm over the prisoner and divert justice.

And his fears were justified. Dave Peters shouted loudly during the commotion, "Let's get him, boys." But it wasn't the right time, I guess. There was plenty of resentment against Potter boiling in the closely packed room, but Mrs. Charles being carried out and calls for, "Is there a Doctor here?" and "Make way, please," engulfed Dave's suggested mobbing. The Judge called sharply: "Who said that?" No one answered, though the babble began to subside and the trigger attention began tightening toward the Judge and Dave. "Who called, 'Let's get him, boys'?" the Judge ordered in an angry voice.

By now the room was quiet and tense, but with the quiet and tension of watching, not of action. Dave wasn't going to back down, though. He answered defiantly, "I did."

"You are fined \$10 for contempt of court and ordered out of the room!"

"Now, Judge," Dave began.

"Silence," ordered the Judge. "Chief Elliot, take the man out. And if there is any more disturbance I'll clear the court room."

Dave turned at the door. "He admits he done it, don't he, Judge? What's all this damn tomfoolery. I say let's hang him!"

"You're fined another \$50," the Judge ordered. "And if I see you in here tomorrow or the day after it'll cost you a hundred."

"Proceed," he directed the Prosecuting Attorney as a murmuring silence settled in the corridors and in the court. The trial was dragging and there were plenty who agreed with Dave. Maybe the man should be taken out and hanged.

It is hard to have a clear head about such things. Suppose he were hanged. Could we in our town breathe easier? Could we know that peace and orderly living would return? There is a tangled undergrowth in most of us we don't want anyone snooping into, as everyone was doing to everyone else as long as the man was there on trial.

"Why waste tax money on such a trial?" Dave Peters kept asking. "He done it, didn't he? What are we waiting for?" But he never said it aloud in court, though after two days he was again every day at the trial.

He followed every word, leaning forward in his seat, holding his hat in his hand and jaw quiet. As a change in proceedings occurred, Dave would sit back in his chair, chew his gum rapidly and turn his hat in his hands. There were many others like Dave. We wanted it to end. We wanted to know that Potter would snap downward into quick pain and oblivion like a butchered hog into scalding water, and twitch there. But we also wanted to follow like hungry dogs on the scent of food or the cougar silently easing forward with skin and muscles tense to crush with teeth and claws the cornered deer. We wanted no step missed in the lumbering walk to death.

What did we hope for? Did we have concern for justice? Did we think we were making amends to that whipped and broken grey sound from Potter's upstairs bedroom? Did we think we would wake at night and know that in no house in our town in our time were chains sawing at their iron bedsteads? You see it is not an easy case after all. We cannot be blamed for flocking to the trial with tense gaiety and saying, "Will the jury recommend hanging, do you think?" and expecting no answer as we jostled anxiously to the seat of justice. We were driven there. We were driven as surely as beef to the sanitary slaughter.

And yet, you know, Potter was not a bad sort. Rather likeable. He spoke quietly when spoken to. He stopped at the Atlas for a glass of beer. He passed remarks about the weather and how was the condition of the stock. He wondered about politics and if the Republicans might someday organize a positive program that would get them back in power. He condemned the Germans for their cruelty and hoped the war would end soon. After a glass, or two at most, he'd wander around the town exchanging small talk with neighbors or a child. But he never got more friendly than that. And he went home early. Sometimes a light would burn in his room just off the

front hall, but never late. A man of orderly habits and quiet almost friendly manner, he was. And though questions were asked, "Where does he get his money? Where did he come from? Has he ever had a wife and family?" answers were forthcoming from this one or that, and soon the questions died. He was just, "Frank Potter, living out in that big Arnold Place." No one I knew ever thought he was a man capable of such horror as we saw that morning in his front hallway, and that he had been perpetrating those five years and for years before that.

Why had Potter done it? Is there part of some men which can be satisfied only with enslavement of so-called inferior beings? Hitler was reported as kind to children. And yet what frightful imprisonments and tortures he took pleasure in. Did he begin with minor cruelties, against only Jews, and then discover that cruelty and prison camps were like sweet drugs that fatten on the body they are plunging into blood and death? And did he perhaps confront himself and staff amidst mourning and destruction and say, "What can we do?" and know that nothing could be done but follow where their whips and bloody paths led?

Potter hadn't meant to be cruel he said quietly at the trial. He didn't whip his sister or restrict her food or turn the heat off in her room except to discipline her. Sometimes she became violent and tried to scratch him or strike at him with her chains. Sometimes she would begin to scream at him. What could he do? As long as things had gone that way and he was forced to look after her, what else could he do? He didn't seem to be asking for mercy or any change from the way of the trial, but he couldn't understand why so much bitterness was being put upon him.

"Someone had to look after her," he explained. "And if she could be controlled only by—severe methods, it was right to do so."

Yes sir, there were many in our town who felt sorry for him. But there were plenty who didn't too. There was Dave Peters, for instance.

Dave paid only \$20 of his \$60 fine. The boys at the Atlas paid the rest. They took a collection. Tod Daly put in \$10 himself. But a few of us chipped in because of love for Dave. We were paying the fine because we knew it was rightly ours. We hadn't thrown our voices like tumbling rock into the court's slow-moving dignity, but we had wanted to. We longed for the paroxysmal release which bloody violence would have given us.

"Listen, God damn it," said Dave as he hefted the money we'd chipped in. "Are we going to let that murdering bastard sit in there like a sneaking coyote, or aren't we?"

"Let's string him up," said Neal Simpson.

"Harry Lund leaves the jail every night about ten for a coke at the drug store," suggested Stew Anderson.

"O. K. here's the plan," said Dave with enthusiasm as he saw the guys crowd around.

"Oh, yeah!" said Stubby Hansen. "Oh, yeah!" he repeated more loudly, halting the talk.

What was Stubby driving at? Was he challenging Dave? We waited. So did Dave. But Stubby said nothing more.

"Do you want to make something of it, Stubby?"

"I'd put up or shut up," said Stubby quietly, which wasn't like Stubby at all.

"I don't think I get you," said Dave pulling money carefully on the pool table he'd been leaning against.

Stubby closed his knife. He'd been using it to cut calouses off his thick square hands. He tossed the closed knife in the air and caught it. He did it twice with great deliberation.

"You ain't missing anything, Peters," he said in a nerve-wrackingly quiet way.

The men moved from between them. Others in the hall moved noiselessly forward and formed a taut watchful ring.

"Well, if I ain't missing anything, Stubby, I'd say you was breeding a scab on that ugly face of yours."

"I ain't running, am I?" Stubby thrust in quick.

This stopped Dave more than a blow. All he'd ever had to do was make out he might take a poke at Stubby and that ended it. But Stubby wasn't backing down. I guess he'd taken enough from Dave. Or maybe he didn't want anything to happen to Frank Potter. Maybe he thought that Frank should be released; that though he'd killed his sister, he was justified. And maybe Stubby was caught up in what was happening to all of us and he wanted to be shaken with pain and to shake others with it. Maybe his fists ached for flesh and bone to twist and thud against.

"I ain't running," said Stubby.

"No, but you better be if you want to take home a whole skin to your adoring Betty." Dave made her name sound like "bitch." We held our breath.

"Cowards always talk big," said Stubby. "Only cowards would think of lynching."

The men shifted and an unworded noise spoke, dangerously dividing us.

"Say, what's got into you guys?" Tod Daly said, coming down from the bar where he'd served beer to some tourists.

"If you guys want to fight, go out back."

That wasn't usual. He seemed to be inviting them to mix it.

"Yeah," said Neal Simpson. "Tod don't want no broken furniture."

"I can't be having fights in here, Dave. You know that."

"There won't be no fight," said Dave. "Stubby just got a little previous."

"I ain't running, am I?" challenged Stubby, and he slipped his knife into his pocket.

"Well, you better be!" Dave took a step forward. The ring of men tightened.

Stubby ran his tongue around inside his mouth. He leaned over the sand box and spit out his chew.

"Wouldn't want to get tobacco juice all over you, Peters." Stubby spat again.

"Why you little bastard," swore Dave as he stepped forward and swung.

Stubby is about six inches shorter than Dave, but he is thick in the chest.

He swayed back so the punch missed, then crashed a terrific blow behind Dave's ear which drove him to the floor. He struck his cheek on the corner of the tobacco stained sand box. Blood streaked out. We all began to babble at the same time.

Neal Simpson yelled and dove for Stubby. He caught him off balance and toppled him to the floor, sinking blows into his face as he fell. Stubby was sinking a few blows of his own. Hebe Larson made for Neal and before a match could flare all of us were in there swinging and yelling. My ear got smashed and blood soaked my shirt and I didn't even know until I got home.

Tod Daly began hurtling chairs into the swirling mass of us. "Break it up!" he kept shouting. But even he didn't want it to stop. He was drunk like the rest of us on the blood and wreckage we were letting loose. Someone grabbed another chair and smashed it into the one Tod was careening. The impact tore both chairs from the fighters and sent them crashing through the cigar show case. The tourists ran into the street and began crying for the police.

After a time each of us, as we were overcome with fatigue and the salty taste of blood, pulled ourselves away and departed into the night. It was not until later, when we awoke sore and stiff in the night, that our shame came flooding through us and we sought sleep with aspirin to keep from asking ourselves what thing this was that had been loosed. This thing we had been carrying with us like a shadow when there is no sun to shape it. Maybe we were more like Potter than we would admit. It was at least more comforting to speculate on him. And the next day the trial continued its hot and halting way toward whatever justice would be achieved.

Why hadn't he put his sister in an asylum? Why had he assumed such a burden? He waited a long time before answering that. Perhaps he didn't know. Where is the line between two actions when the actions themselves create new situations?

They had lived together on a dry farm, he said. She had begun acting queer, not as obedient as she should have been—after all he was in charge. Sometimes she'd completely defy him. He'd come in from the fields and meals would not be ready. She would scream at him if he scolded her. She threatened to leave and asked for her share of the farm which, of course, she couldn't have, he said, because of her "condition." He began locking her in while he was in the field. Their neighbors were fed and visited rarely. They were not encouraged to return, especially as his sister began to be such a worry to him, though she nagged at him to have them come again or let her go visiting. Two years before he moved to our town he'd locked her in her room if anyone came. She was too sick to see anyone, he would explain.

He began using the whip then. It seemed to quiet her. Yes, he had thought of sending her to an asylum, but how would he explain why he hadn't done so before? Sometimes he had considered ways to kill her. His neighbors knew she was sick, he reasoned. If he killed her they would think she had died. Then he thought he would do it between the time he left his farm and when he would arrive in our town. He would bury her in some desolate spot along the way. No one knew about her here, and if anyone who had known should ask he would explain that she had died.

After that confession he was quiet. The Judge told him to go on, what had happened to his plans?

He couldn't bring himself to kill her, he said. She was so happy to be moving to town. She would be able to see people and buy herself some new clothes. She was so grateful for what he was doing for her.

"You mean you were *afraid* to kill her," asserted the prosecuting attorney.

"Perhaps."

"Why did you continue to chain her when you came here?"

"What else could I do?"

"You mean she began insisting on spending money for 'new clothes'?"

"Of course not!"

"A moment ago you said your sister asked for her share of the farm. Are you certain that her wanting her share wasn't the reason you *tried to make her think* she was insane?"

The attorneys stopped to jangle and the Judge told them that Potter could answer.

"Of course not!" said Potter. He was angry. The trial was nearing its close and everyone was on edge.

"Are you sure you didn't *deliberately drive* her insane—if she were, which of course you made sure we'd never find out."

"Of course not!" shouted Potter.

"Objection!" interrupted Joe Hawthorne for the defense.

"Strike it out," ordered the Judge.

"Why did you keep that pick handle in your room?"

Again Potter waited before answering. "I thought I might need it."

"What for?" snapped the lawyer.

"To . . ."

"To kill your sister with, isn't that right?"

"That is what it was used for," answered Potter with resignation.

"Didn't you sometimes use it instead of the buggy whip, to 'quiet her'?"

"Of course not!"

"Didn't you ever fear you might be found out?"

"I suppose so."

"What did you expect to do then?"

"I hadn't thought about it. I was caught. I lived from day to day. It was a nightmare. It was awful. I'm glad it's over."

"Potter," continued the Prosecution after several seconds of watching the man on trial, "Have you been reading the papers recently?"

"I have."

"Have you seen the pictures of the slave-labor camps in Germany and Poland and elsewhere?"

"Yes," answered Potter hesitantly.

"You have noticed then how the Nazis beat their victims to death after stripping them of their *wealth*, their labor, and perhaps, even their minds?"

"What has this to do with the case?" interrupted Joe Hawthorne angrily as he and all the rest of us got the implication.

"Strike it out," ruled the Judge.

"Case rests," announced the Prosecution quickly, as he walked to his table.

Potter sat there looking at his big hands loosely interlocked. His hair was thin and closely cropped. His big round face was quiet but his eyes were haunted. He raised his head and looked across town where his house was set in the tangle of Russian Olive trees he'd let grow tall to obscure the staring of his uncurtained windows. That big, gaunt and lonely house where Potter had destroyed whatever hope of respected contentment he may have had.

Following the final arguments, Judge Hall instructed the jury, then adjourned to await their verdict which came thirty-six hours later. We filed from the court room and our talk was covered and wandering. We had seen and heard things to quiet us. Those against hanging asked, "What else could he have done?" Some of us said, "Boy, I'm glad I'm not on that jury."

Potter was led off to his cell. He said nothing more. That night he ate a small section of his hamburger steak. Harry Lund said he had the quiet, confident look of death on him—and knew it, and didn't care.

The town was quiet that night. Quiet with the stillness only small towns know when tragedy impalls the senses. Just think on Potter sitting there in jail, we said to ourselves. What do we want of him? Is it justice we are concerned with? Dead, his sister is undoubtedly happier. So what did we want of him?

"Quit bothering your head about it," my wife said and turned over to sleep. A long time later she whispered, "You asleep?"

"No."

"I'm sick of it all," she said with sleepless anguish.

"Yeah," I agreed.

"It's almost as if we couldn't wait until Potter is dead."

"I don't know that it's as bad as that. And besides, he might not hang."

"This whole town has acted like a pack of wolves ever since the trial began—watching, watching—waiting and fighting—like you men the other night."

"You exaggerate."

"Exaggerate, nothing! It's . . ."

"We have to have the trial, don't we?" I asked sitting up and acting as if I could see her in the darkness.

"What do we get out of it?" she said, also sitting up. "The town's gone crazy."

"We have to have justice, don't we?"

"Justice, my eye."

"We can't let a man like that go free, can we?"

"We want to kill him, not lock him up. We're just like wolves."

"Oh my gosh," I said. We both sat huddled there in the darkness.

"It's not Potter I'm worried about. It's us. It's the town. When you came home all bloody the other night something happened to me. I talked to Hebe's wife and Stubby's wife and several others whose husbands were in that brawl. They felt it too. It's not Potter. It's *us* I'm afraid for."

"It's not as bad as that," I said lying back down.

"I hope so," she said.

Neither of us slept for a long time. And we were not alone.

Potter was pronounced guilty, all right. Sometime later he was hanged.

Dave Peters and some others made the long trip to the state prison for the hanging. Maybe more of us would have gone, but though we have the gas our tires are pretty bad. His body was returned and buried in our cemetery. His church offered to take his body, but we never learned who paid to have him taken care of.

He lies there beside the broken body of his sister. For weeks none passed the place without stretching the neck to see the grave, brown and seed-bed for next year's weeds and indifferent grass. We go about the business of our town as usual, trying to make an honest dollar, as the saying is. Our children laugh and point for any visitor's benefit, "There's Frank Potter's grave, and where his sister is he murdered. He's the only man in our graveyard who ever got hung. Isn't that exciting?"

Our town will never be the same. We hope it will be a better place. But we've been disturbed to find what violence and cruelty reside in each of us. The knowledge of that evil in us makes us sometimes pause and wonder what we are. Sometimes at parties, or in a talking, laughing crowd, when Potter's trial is mentioned we all grow grave, laugh less, talk quieter. He's dead of course. His trial is done. But there with most of us, like a shadow on a cloudy day, is the uneasiness that we are on trial ourselves.



Clifford Wright—Child Running



ROBERT WINTER REESE—A Movement

*It is late autumn, and at the fall of day
Roses once petalled to their stems turn between
The folds of wind, toying and twisting the less secure life,
Before winter cups the living into its palms
And a mellowed earth hardens its wrinkled crust.*

*It is late, but before clouds charge down-sky
Into the horizon, and the day-moon crescents
In the upper sky, the mind arpeggios the memory of time.
And an aria of a distant voice
Crescendoes across the autumn life of man,
Echoing back-earth in an overtone of sounds.*

*It is late life, and you have heard one theme,
One canto from all your labored pain and torture,
And now you ask aloud: "What was the illusion?
What was the image I never grasped?" while the bitter aria
Diminuendoes, and alone on a silent stage, nothing remaining,
You lay your baton across your folded score and walk the
 applauded stage
Revolving back again, into oblivion.*

*It is now late autumn, and the blue dog-star, Orion, the
 ermine-fur Pleiades
Blinds your sight, until in the wild blanketing wind
You are no more, and our memory, quickly following, forgets
 the chord
On which your life was built.*

*Late fall: and oaks drop their leaves
Beneath cooling suns; madronas gather bark and hemlocks twist
 from winds.
Now, repeating itself,
The earth in altering life preserves its own existence.*

JAMES BOYER MAY—The Ruesabords

The entire street conjectured how separation of the Ruesabords would culminate. Seated evenings on galleries, most of which consisted of three or four wooden steps on the sidewalk, all watched for William Ruesabord to come once again to implore his wife Eloise.

Sometimes, drunk, he'd stagger into the ditch between irregular broken redbrick walk and rubble of unpaved street. The ditch, like similar ditches throughout old sections of New Orleans, had carried sewage as well as storm-water. This particular ditch still caught slop from the kitchen sink in the delapidated paintless corner house occupied by the Ruesabords. The sink emptied to a trench across brick walk to the ditch alongside the house. Stumbling into this greenish soapy slime, never too drunk to realize, William Ruesabord would curse that the sink was unpipied to the sewer. He'd then kick over their coverless garbage can, unfailingly brimful of rotting refuse from days past—for collections by the mule-drawn garbage wagon were uncertain in the highest degree.

The kicking over of the garbage made everybody laugh. An angry husband denied was screamingly funny when one thought of his ungratified desires; and William Ruesabord spoke frankly of this. Always he had been a good husband, him, he told them. Eloise and he, they'd been tres good together; and now Eloise was *bête*—her. If only once he could get in to her, he'd make her glad to have him again—yes. But *cacasha* on her!

His wife, hearing him through closed shutters of front door or window—long narrow homes stood so close—would cry. "Now keep your big mout' shut, you! Don't never say nutt'n like dose t'ings to people, you! You are a bastard, you! Keep your mout' shut—you hear me?"

She only addressed him before neighbors. He also told how she wouldn't answer why she shut him out, neither in foul English nor the patois she'd used before marrying, leaving the bayou. Her—she'd learned words in English her papa nor her mamma never had used in French. Nor her gra'mere nor her gran'pere neither. They were excellent people back there on the bayou, and clean—but this one!

Everyone puzzled over Mrs. Ruesabord's obduracy. The average daily words between them, the average weekly fights; but no outstanding violence. He'd never, for instance, picked her up by the feet and knocked her head on the floor as Pete Bacano had done to his wife the night before he'd left. What could it be? They weren't so young any more. Whatever it was, one would suppose she'd content herself with denying him maybe a few nights, perhaps even locking him out a few nights. But obviously final with her, and he would not have it so.

Everyone felt underlying gravity of the situation. No ordinary quarrel, and something grave would result. Even the children of the street—careless as they were of what went on outside their own malicious lives of strewing glass to cut auto tires, shooting hapless cats with airguns and slingshots, gambling for pennies or marbles, throwing rocks at birds or into mud puddles to splash people walking—sometimes would stop whatever malicious activity to

watch apprehensively. William Ruesabord became terrifying desperate at times, and his pale face would turn ever more pale.

Neighbors had expected he'd eventually break in, beat her. Why hadn't he? Now—after these weeks might result something more sensational than beating and reconciliation. And none longer really felt the Ruesabords would become reconciled. Why didn't he find a woman to live with in another part of the city? That would be sensible solution for church people like the Ruesabords, who never would get a divorce.

"All I'm asking you is why you no want me. That much you can say. You hear, Eloise? You hear me what I'm saying to you?" A soft voice—almost gentle; yet ominous, and sinister demand in the final question.

No answer from over jagged blue-red-black-patterned linoleum closing lower half of the window from which the entire sash was gone. The slight blond man crouched, hand on sill, thin lips tightpressed. Head cocked, eyes squinted, he listened as though for some sound to give reply his wife refused.

No man with her, no man had been with her. He'd have been told, the neighbors watching. She sat alone in there with Hermione, Louis at work on the nightshift at the parts plant. Big for his age, and she must have had a certificate forged for him. They didn't hire fifteen-year-olds in war plants. They required birth certificates. He'd thought of going to work himself, maybe in the airplane factory; but it would have been too much trouble. Besides he made more than ever with his taxi. Plenty of cheap blackmarket gas in New Orleans, and sailors, marines, soldiers, merchant seamen searching for whores. Drunk most of them, and easy to shortchange. But he never hit them over the head, robbed them—him. Many did; but that he wouldn't do.

Humid spring twilight. He crouched perspiring at the linoleum-barricaded window. Louis would have cut the linoleum from a remnant on the kitchen floor, his mother crying at him to find something, to make something to close the window. And the upended legless table barricaded the back door. Himself had done that, tired of audacious rats and starved cats creeping in for food particles among floor debris.

From a ventilator on tar-papered rear of the neighborhood theatre which made the back wall of the yard, a news announcer. The Pacific War—thunder of bombs. Martial music and more bombs. He stared into thick growth of weeds flowering like miniature tropical forest, encroaching about the circle of ashes where they burned.

But no thoughts of green forests—of fat flesh denied him. Yes—he'd had women this period of weeks; yet he wanted her. Brunette and beautiful, though fat; and her fat, rounded and firm, just yielding enough to excite a man. They had been tres good together.

Why did she deny him? More reason than the original excuse for putting him out—and which she'd undoubtedly report if he forced entry. And the police would arrest him, for he had no great friends among them. He paid off, but he didn't work with women who worked with the police; so they'd arrest him if Eloise told them she'd found his hand on Hermione, even though she knew he'd meant nothing, that he'd been too drunk to realize what he'd been doing.

Why? Though he came here the entire summer and fall and into winter, talking with neighbors, preventing her from sitting on their broken galerie—he'd find out. If no man—staring into humid green twilight, black speculation of which he seldom let himself think. He seldom really let himself think of that—only when he did find the answer—

Bombs again. One some night of discovery he'd approach with a grenade, pull whatever one pulled before throwing, wipe from the street the house and her in it. No—his knife he'd use . . .

His visits to the street had become more frequent. In the beginning he'd appeared usually around midnight, his hour for lunch before the separation. Then he'd started coming also in heat of day, when comparatively few—even children—saw him. Though many of the children never went to school, the sun would be too hot for play. And finally he'd started coming soon after supper when his taxi should have been busiest.

This night he went back to carrying passengers from dark until midnight. Then, returning, he parked a block away, walked to the street so she couldn't recognize the sound of the taxi. When she heard the taxi she waited in absolute quiet, and that was like talking to an empty house, though he would know she was there.

Tonight many children, much noise. Too much noise to hear anything from within the house, unlighted besides. He stared from across the street, thinking that if the roof had holes he'd stealthily climb and peer down. But a heavy slate-shingle roof, the only part of the house in repair. He thought of Louis, not yet returned from nightshift. Then that black speculation again—and that this visit was useless.

He turned suddenly, and Mrs. Prudhon's dog barked from behind her yard door. All the dogs commenced barking from behind fences, from under houses. The children imitated dog-barks. He cursed, and they laughed. Rage strangled him. He couldn't come the entire summer and fall and into winter. To do so would be to invite *la folie*—yes.

He went to his taxi. Decision. He'd remain continuously to watch every movement, listen for every sound until he'd find out! A trip to the room he'd taken in the Quarter to eat, drink the rest from a bottle there—and then he'd return and remain!

Again. Not long after light, and the street really silent. He tiptoed past the front, tried the yard door. Locked. He sat on the galerie.

Lighter. He gazed down the close row of houses at varied elaborately-corniced faded fronts, faded contrasting colors of tight-closed shutters. During this war few repainted, even fronts—which were most important. Hardly anyone painted sides or back of a house anyway.

Some going to work nodded with concealed smiles. He crossed to the opposite corner, sat on the stone step of the grocery, which wouldn't open for another hour. From the house there'd be no sound until heat of day. He just as well could have come later; but he'd hoped to find the yard door unlocked.

Bruno Lamerti's grocery, largest building on the street, recently had been painted fresh white in entirety. Quite modern upstairs where Lamerti lived,

they said; but downstairs where had been a storeroom, Lamerti rented to a miserable family of four. The man had had fever so much he'd shrunk yellow, couldn't work steady more than a few weeks at a time. William Ruesabord found himself wondering how they managed in one room with no running water. Lamerti must let them go to his toilet upstairs; but at night that wouldn't be convenient. He gazed at their door; and as though because he gazed, it opened slightly. He looked away; and from the side of an eye saw the girl of about four squat and urinate on the walk. So they had no pot, or it was full. And how did they keep food? Unlike him to think of such things, but he had to think of something besides— . . . Louis would be changing shifts. He'd be here all day and night, not go to work until the second morning. The best of days and nights to watch . . . He let his attention be drawn to two cockroaches which ran from under the grocery door, returned. That back room must crawl with roaches if they kept food. No icebox, because they took no ice.

The ice truck now. Pat Simmons shouting down the block. Pat neared, making noise to awaken everyone. Everyone recognized that voice, and the truck too gave forth distinctive squeaks and rattles. Many a morning he'd cursed Pat for wakening him, while Eloise had run to cry through the shutters how many pounds to leave on the galerie for her to pick up. Then when she'd returned to bed he'd been waiting, no longer angry that Pat had wakened him . . . Her—she'd always been willing enough; yet now—

The ice truck stopped. He narrowly watched the house. But Eloise didn't cry through the shutters. Perhaps she saw him, realized he'd wait for her to pick up the ice. One day in first heat of morning he'd found ice on the galerie, had waited till it melted to a sliver he could have held in one hand; but she'd not appeared. All these weeks he'd not actually seen her.

He decided to telephone he'd not be at the stand through the day. Mrs. Prunhon was up now, and he'd use her phone. He walked toward Mrs. Prudhon's in the middle of the block opposite his home, passing the house of the only negro family on the street. The grown daughter came out dressed for work. She spoke gravely, and he replied, observing she was handsome for colored, that her legs weren't straight up and down as most colored girls' legs. But she was respectable—the Morton Browns were more respectable than any white family on the street, when one stopped to realize. He scratched his head, knocked on Mrs. Prudhon's door. Yeh—as clean a bunch of niggers as you'd find and never gave sass.

Mrs. Prudhon, in soiled pink dressing gown, motioned to the rear. "You know where—you used it before. Ain't anything wrong—is there?"

"Wrong? Not's I know—me. I ain't living home yet, if that's what you mean."

Mrs. Prunhon shook her head with repressed smile. She'd not reject advances; but her breasts and stomach sagged. He picked his steps among playingcards the children had left strewn on bare board floor, stepped around a bed which nearly barred the room with its length. To reach the telephone, three darkened rooms beyond with sleeping children sprawled in each on sheetless coverless mattresses. Their tatters of underwear gave off odors of perspiration and excreta. Her children and those of her present husband by

former marriage. His first wife had died of her last fever, and her first husband had been a suicide.

In the street again, having paid no heed to an outrightly suggestive leer from Mrs. Prudhon. He breathed fresh air deeply. In another hour the Cozy Beer Parlor, beyond the grocery but in sight of the house, would open. A beer would clear his throat of after-taste from the whiskey finished in his room. Besides he needed something to keep his resolution. He'd make headquarters of the beer parlor, occasionally stroll back past the corner to listen.

Through the day he drank, eating nothing. Oppressive heat; and he continued drinking, though he knew too much beer was no help from heat. Perhaps walking the treeless street to the corner, loitering, walking back, had made him drink too much. The sun seemed to have blazed from straight overhead long enough for two days.

Half-sick, he reeled again among tables and chairs to the small bar. Swarthy thick-necked Tim Morgan raised his hairy perspiring arm, shook his head.

"What the hell—wha'dyou mean—no beer?"

"Yeh—no beer. I don't get much. Gotta divvy it among the customers. Gotta keep a little for late trade. You got enough."

"How th'hell d'you know'f I got enough? You knew me, Tim—giv'salittle beer."

"You hoid me—no more beer." Tim wiped his perspiring forehead with a bar cloth.

"You got beer—said y'self savin' it f'th'late customers."

"That's right."

"Lis'en, Tim—I know you a long time—me. I know all about you."

"Wha'dyou know about me?" Tim stopped wiping his forehead, fixed dark eyes on him.

"Huh? Me—I ain' said a woid. We all wanna be frien's. Give us a beer. I don't buy no cigarets now—you can spare me the beer."

"I got no cigarettes anyhow. Go back an' si'down!"

What he'd said had angered Tim; but that he'd murdered more than once was commonly said on the street. He'd murdered a half-dozen men in the old days when in politics more than now. Nowadays political murder was punished—not easy to come off free from a provoked fight that ended in death.

He went to the front, sat under the awning on the bench against the yellow-and-red beer sign . . . Those had been deliberate murders. Him—he would kill only for what would make any man kill—like—

Where did Eloise get cigarets now? Stores had none—not even to sell singly . . . Women and kids didn't get cigarets these days—and that was damn good.

Gran'peres in shirtsleeves and suspenders gathered under the awning, talked of fishing, catching crawfish, shrimping. They spat frequently on the bricks.

A colored boy from around the block passed eating a section of watermelon. William Ruesabord looked toward the house on the corner. The children, playing again, batted a ball over the house from one side of the corner to the other. Maybe Eloise would open a shutter, shriek at them to stop. The old men spitting and the colored boy eating watermelon made him sick anyway.

At the grocery he nearly collided with a woman carrying a shopping sack—the woman of the family in the former storeroom. Again he wondered how they kept food . . . Sick . . . Maybe if he'd stand out of the sun on the shaded side of the grocery—

He stared from the shade. Soon Louis would be up from his day's sleep. The batting of the ball over the house must have wakened him.

In a shallow front yard next door two girls in soiled white playsuits shaved ice with a scraper, made dishes of ice shavings—snowballs—over which they poured pale green syrup. These they sold to other children for two, three, four cents according to size. William Ruesabord watched a boy alternately lick and pat with grimy hand a dish of this concoction. More sick . . . Damned wonder they didn't contract *la lepre*—*des gamins*! . . . Eloise didn't mind dirt. They'd fought when he'd tried to make her clean house. They'd fought too when he'd wanted to spend for improvements, since the landlord repaired nothing. She'd insisted they save for the statue she wanted on her sepulcher and to give the church . . . Maybe she'd need to have given the church plenty for the sin she'd now committed—her. Maybe too a saint's statue would be needed over her in death to keep the evil ones from her—if anything could keep them from her.

The first sound all day from the corner house—and simultaneously a violent retching doubled him over. Vomiting, he nearly fell into the ditch. Lungs and abdomen contracted in pain, he couldn't get breath as liquid spurted from nose and mouth.

He gasped, lifted his head, discovered himself to be crying. The house door opened. Louis, with a grocery basket.

Everything revealed—clearly. Revelation issued from inside with relief from pain of vomiting. Also from the drowsy aspect of his son's long fallow face. He saw in his son's face—that satiety and exhaustion and close lustful remembrance shown in faces of men just after they've lain with a woman.

Waiting had ended—

He stood quite sobered as his son passed not speaking. Then he rapidly crossed the street and up the broken steps and through the door his son had left slightly ajar. In his right hand the knife from his pocket. His left fingers pulled out the long blade as he slammed shut the door with his shoulder.

He began to cry audibly with deep sobs as he moved toward the bed on which Eloise lay asleep on her back with mouth open, snoring.

Cj. STEVENS—Fantasia On a Folk Song

Go weave and spin.
You can't go, Buckeye Jim.

*Can't go to the remembered ocean
the Golden Fleece to find.
Must dream of ships in motion
on currents of the mind.
'Way down yonder in the deep blue water,
the sea king lives with his green eyed daughter.
Buckeye Jim, you can't go.
Go weave and spin.
You can't go, Buckeye Jim.*

*Can't watch the lizards crawl
on the crumbling cities of the moon.
Must build your own towers, and all
in the glare of noon.
'Way down yonder at the end of the world,
the monkeys swing with their long tails curled.
Buckeye Jim, you can't go.
Go weave and spin.
You can't go, Buckeye Jim.*

*Can't dance in foreign cities
to the lilt of songs unknown.
Must sing your own little ditties
and dance alone.*
*'Way off yonder in an eastern land,
the slim brown girls on a white beach stand.*
Buckeye Jim, you can't go.
Go weave and spin.
You can't go, Buckeye Jim.

*Can't go to a far battle field
and high adventure find.
Must make the Saracen yield
on the acres of the mind.*
*'Way off yonder in the land of Spain,
the brave men fought and will fight again.*
Buckeye Jim, you can't go.
Go weave and spin.
You can't go, Buckeye Jim.
Poor, poor Buckeye Jim.

MICHAEL FRAENKEL—Notes On Writing

*From *The Journal*, the Mexican Years 1940-1944, to appear fall, 1946.

Jan. 7, 1941—To get around the tyranny of too great seriousness—write because you have found nothing better or more diverting to do . . .

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Jan. 17—The personal problem. Unless raised to the larger (objective) plane, sheer waste.

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Jan. 24—Reading Carlyle and Valéry at the time time is an unforgettable experience in contradictory attitudes toward writing:

"Whenever you have written any sentence that looks particularly excellent be sure to blot it out."

—Carlyle, *Characteristics*.

"To write should really mean to construct, as solidly as possible, a machine of language."

—Valéry, *Variety I*

"Of our thinking we might say it is but the mere upper surface that we shape into articulate thoughts—underneath the region of argument and consecutive discourse, lies the region of meditation; here in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on."

Carlyle, *Ibid*.

"Once it is agreed that our greatest brilliance is clearly allied to our greatest chances of error and that the average of our thoughts is in some sort insignificant—then it becomes evident that our faculty of choosing and organizing is the part of us which must be ceaselessly exerted. The rest, which depends on nobody, is as useless to invoke as rain."

Valéry, *Ibid*.

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Feb. 15—Relate your personal problems to the larger social ones, thus cancelling out the first as strictly personal and the second as strictly social problems.

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March 13—I was struck by a note in Spender's "September Journal" in *Horizon* (May 1940) about the business of living under the same roof with another person. The presence of someone, however thoughtful and understanding, acts as a restraining, a restricting and constricting influence: one feels self-conscious, on guard with oneself. There are certain liberties a man can take with himself when alone that he would not dare take otherwise. Who likes to be caught in the act of making faces at himself? . . . Then, too, there is always the feeling of responsibility toward the other person. How does my behavior affect my companion? The question is always there. It is an open account that can never be closed while two people live together. Curi-

ously enough, these things bear more, and not less, importantly when the two mean much to each other. They are hardly conducive to that atmosphere of freedom which some artists feel they must have to do their best work.

‘ ‘ ‘

May 1—All this endless talk about what constitutes pornography! For me the whole question simmers down to this simple proposition: who is the writer talking to? With whom in himself or in his reader (it's the same thing, all essential literature is a form of monologue), with whom in himself or his reader is he communicating? Is he talking to the man in himself or the pander? It it's the first, its revelation, whatever it is he talks about, whether cabbage, hairpins, unpaid gas bills, lust, crime, fornication or what not. If it's the second, it's dirt, whether he talks about God or the angels. That's just about all there is to it. It's a question of the *personae* of the colloquy, nothing more.

‘ ‘ ‘

June 5—The “perfect masterpiece.” Is it possible? Or is it as Maurice Ravel put it in that touching confession of faith he wrote in one of the lucid intervals before his death: “If that were possible, I should be the first to know it and there would be nothing left for me to do except either to stop writing or to die. I say this, despite the example of the Lord, who took a long rest after having created the world . . . and who was so wrong!”

‘ ‘ ‘

Aim: to make expression as natural a thing as a bodily or physiological function.

‘ ‘ ‘

June 14—One can safely say that at least half, possibly more, of the business of writing is a matter of momentum, of developing the sustaining momentum. For me this can mean only one thing: getting down to a working understanding (coming to rest or balance) with myself. It is another way of saying that I have to be alone. Thursday night I accomplished more in six hours than I did in the previous six days, and this, only because I had been absolutely alone for as many days. Come Friday morning, and the fatal interruption: I was suddenly yanked out of myself by the affair of C. How many days will it take me now to get started again?

‘ ‘ ‘

June 15—You cannot be indifferent to certain emotions. Either they tyrannize over you or you tyrannize over them.

‘ ‘ ‘

June 17—Realistic and romantic comedy; realistic and romantic tragedy. I would say there is no such thing as romantic comedy; all comedy is realistic. There is only realistic and romantic tragedy. The first is comedy inverted—note how different people (and often the same person at different times) may be differently affected by it—some to the point of tears, others to the point of laughter. Romantic tragedy is tragedy pure, the most perfect examples of which are found in Shakespeare—*Othello*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc.

June 26—You must keep on persevering in this: to express yourself as perfectly as possible the first time, not the second or third, but the first. To trust to second impulse is to cheat yourself in the end.

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Without a soil in deep, active feeling and emotion in daily life, living, writing will wither and die. A man writes as he lives.

~ ~ ~

To become commonplace. It is to permit habit to take over when experience has exhausted itself.

~ ~ ~

July 30—The importance of keeping solvent in writing, of not piling up debts which are bound to plague one later on. Last night, before falling asleep, I was thinking of how the writing of poetry helps to keep one solvent from year to year, day to day, I was about to say. It was when I stopped writing poetry that I began to fall behind; the gap between living and writing grew wider and wider. For the level of solvency changed at once—one can carry a greater haul, so to speak, and over a greater period of time, on the mental than on the emotional plane. But why did I stop writing poetry? With the question, that whole nerve-wracking winter of 1931 comes back to my mind in a rush. What a bitter experience the poem had proved! It was essentially a very personal type of expression which depended for its motive power almost entirely on the immediate personal reaction, and I seemed to have run completely dry. No matter from what angle I approached myself, no matter where I tapped myself, I got nothing but the thinnest trickle; there was no striking water (depth) anywhere. I was exhausted. I recall my walk home one evening after a visit to Sam Putnam's on 23rd Street; on that walk I felt something of the old sense of fullness of power return, and I could not get home fast enough. But when I found myself at the desk and began to write, there was the same trouble: I just could not get going, I was completely stalled. I fought on—the result was nil; complete emotional blur. I threw it into the wastebasket. I tried again but with no more success. It was clear that I had exhausted the personal source. But the mistake I made was to attribute this to a falling off of the poetic impulse, instead of a drying-up of the personal source. Instead of dropping poetry altogether, I should have taken up the more objective approach. It would have served as a kind of recuperation, and perhaps ultimately uncovered fresh personal sources.

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Aug. 22—For the true material of tragedy we must turn to the imagination rather than to life. The latter is altogether too lacking in purpose, meaning and direction.

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Aug. 23—Be patient. You look for something done or accomplished today, now. But things are always being accomplished in which one has no hand, so to speak. This moment, say, in which time seems to go by without any tangible results, it has its value; in this moment perhaps the real spade work is done.

Aug. 26—A style that is at once full and empty, consistent and contradictory, certain and uncertain, hard and gentle, comprehensible, cold and passionate, etc. Dostoevsky is the only one I know of who has at all attained it.

✓ ✓ ✓

Nov. 29—The writer's chief problem is timing: synchronizing thought and execution. An undue gap between one and the other, for any reason whatever, and the result is—dead writing.

✓ ✓ ✓

In the act of writing, I think we might make a useful distinction between what I would call "the writer" and "the man." The writer is in the act, the man outside the act, in life, that is, for the act of writing is also an act of life, situated and performed in life, embraced by life. But the "life-act" is so all-embracing, so much larger, more continuous and infinitely more complex than the "writing-act" that what applies to one does not apply to the other; they move on different planes and call for different roles. The writer is the actor in the act who performs, writes. He is completely under the spell of the act, one with it, immersed in it, in much the same way as a runner is immersed in the act of running or a tightrope walker in the act of balancing himself. In this sense and to this extent his mind may be said to be the mind *of the act*, the mind of the writer writing: involuntary, unconscious, working on its own power and momentum. On the other hand, the man is at most only an observer in the act, who happens to be present, for writing is still an act of life, as I say; thus, his mind may be said to be the mind *not of the act but of life*, and as such subject to the laws, conditions, etc., of a most general, continuous and, at any one moment, highly unparticularized and undirected process; it is free to go and do where and what it likes; it is by and large "open," aware and conscious. The distinction has the merit of coming to grips with the writing process in what is essentially germane to it, *sui generis*, thus enabling us to state and define the primary condition that makes for good writing—I am thinking entirely of the writing as such, (the quality), not the content (range or depth of thought). For writing to be something more than mere statement but a vital, moving expression as revolutionary of form as content, either the man in the act of writing must be eliminated altogether, leaving the field entirely to the writer—an impossible aim in the nature of the thing (writing being an act of life and necessarily involving therefore the man)—or they must keep as separate and apart as possible, the man remaining strictly the observer and the writer strictly the actor. It is the same at bottom as saying that to be of a high order as writing—again, qualitatively—writing should be engaged in essentially as an automatic act, an act as independent of the will as possible; it should be done, in a word, as *writing*, nothing more nor less: a process, an act. The writer acts, writes, not the man but the writer, the *writer writing*.

P. S. The distinction has the further merit of illuminating if not entirely explaining these phenomena, among others:

1) Why a person of discernment, sensibility, knowledge, etc., despite these and other qualifications, still cannot write or writes badly. (Man and writer get in each other's way because they stand too close).

2) Faults in writing such as bad or wrong slanting, emotional or mental blur, false tone, etc., etc. (The results of a kind of back-talk continually going on between the writer and the man.)

3) Why often the free or spontaneous writer (the autonomous writing machine) attains to a higher degree of inner consistency, order and logic—in the profounder sense—than the more conscious and deliberate one. (He pursues the organic logic of the act of writing as such, without trying to square the logic of the writer with the logic of the man—in the very nature of things two different kinds of logic.)

* * *

Dec. 18—In writing, each time you begin, begin with yourself first and the material second. Thus, you will begin more or less from scratch, as if nothing had been done, felt or thought before, and what you write will be fresh and spontaneous and immediate. For the self is always in a fresh and new configuration of itself; it is perpetually self-renewing. Thus also, what you write will bear the impress of your whole self, not just part of yourself, for it will stem not so much from a need to express some particular thing as from the need of expression as such; so it will be pure, disinterested, gratuitous, as it were. A child is whole in what it does because a child is capable of the completely gratuitous act.



HARRY MANNING—

The Magic Horse of the Burning Mountain

Once on a day in the times when wishing still helped one, young Prince Arnal went walking in the forest by his father's castle. As he walked he cried out in misery, for his land was a place where no fish swam, no birds sang, no corn grew, and Death took whom he might.

"Woe rubs my heart," he cried, "for no blessings are on this land and Unhappiness and Misfortune roam abroad with none to hinder them."

On the instant an ugly, dirty old man, no higher than a frog, appeared before him, sitting on the low hanging branch of a tree.

"Prince Arnal!" cried the creature in a wee voice.

"Who is there?" asked the Prince, looking about in a maze.

"A friend, Prince Arnal! Give me a thing and I give you a thing."

"And what thing is yours?"

Whereupon the ancient demanded that the Prince kiss him three times on the lips, on the day he should become king, in return for which the old man would teach Arnal the spells upon his land, that he might lift them. The Prince, though loathe to touch such an ugly old creature, agreed to the bargain.

The olden creature then spoke in these words, "The Ogre of the Burning Mountain was long ago offended by your father and by spells he knows has made it this way:

*'None happy here,
No soul with cheer,
But the kingdom under Sorrow's sway,
Until in the square,
With the people there,
From his horse the king does fall each day.'*

Remember your promise, Prince Arnal!"

And he vanished without another word. The young prince walked happily homeward, and told his father the king that birds would fly, fish would swim, corn would grow, and none but the old would die if only he would ride to the square each day and fall off his horse.

The king cried "Nonsense!" and emptied his flagon of wine—for he was not as good as a king should be—and soon forgot all about it. This put Prince Arnal into a sorry mood, but there was no help for it.

But very shortly the old king choked to death over his wine, and Arnal, though naturally very sad, saw that now all would be as it was before. He got upon his horse, rode to the square, where all the people were gathered, and then spurred his steed so painfully that it reared and bucked, throwing Arnal to the ground. The people, seeing that their king loved them very deeply, set up a great shout, crying "Long live the king! Long live Good King Arnal!" And as they shouted, and as Arnal with much pain but much joy arose, a happy throng of birds speckled the ground with shadows, singing right sprightly, and a great school of fish flashed in the sunlight above the

waters of the river, and the withered stalks of corn in the fields grew straight and green. And when Arnal saw this his joy was complete, and he had no thing to rub against his feelings; but a bird flew near his ear, and whispered "Remember your promise."

Arnal remembered the ugly little old man of the forest, and immediately took himself there, and on the same branch found the shrivelled gnome.

"In good time, King Arnal, and here are my lips for thee."

With which he pursed his dead-fish lips and pushed forward his wart-head. Arnal was not pleased that he must kiss the foul thing, but he closed his eyes, shuddered, and darted his lips forward.

"Once!" cried the tiny monster, "and two times more."

Arnal retched with the corruption of those lips, but once again darted his own forward.

"Twice!" cried the tiny monster, "and one time more!"

Arnal leaned against the tree, rubbed his lips on his coat, spat, and then, near vomiting, slowly pushed forward his lips.

"Thrice!" cried the tiny monster, "and no times more!"

And when Arnal opened his eyes there stood before him the most beautiful maiden that eyes could see, and as he stood wildered she told him that she was Kreena, the daughter of the Ogre of the Burning Mountain, and had been enchanted by Arnal's father. When she had finished her story, Arnal, who had been love-struck on the spot, asked her to be his queen, to which she very readily agreed.

They went home to Arnal's castle, and lived happily many years, for birds flew in the air, fish swam in the water, corn grew in the fields, and none but the old died. The only sorry thing was that every day King Arnal must mount his horse, ride to the square, and there allow himself to be thrown to the ground. Even this was not an impossible thing, for all his people were there, and as he fell would shout "Long live the king! Long live Good King Arnal!"

But one day Arnal sprained his wrist, and said to Kreena, "This is all very well when one is young and has his health, but what of the days of my age? When my bones become brittle I shall break a new one every day."

Kreena felt pain at her heart, for she knew these were wise words. She thought a while, and said "There is no one can help you but my father, the Ogre of the Burning Mountain, and he will not unless he must. For though he has a horse from which a glass-boned crone could fall in safety, he will not give it you of his choice, so you must steal it. But do as I say and all will be well. Take this ring for your right thumb, and if you are in need twist it three times, crying

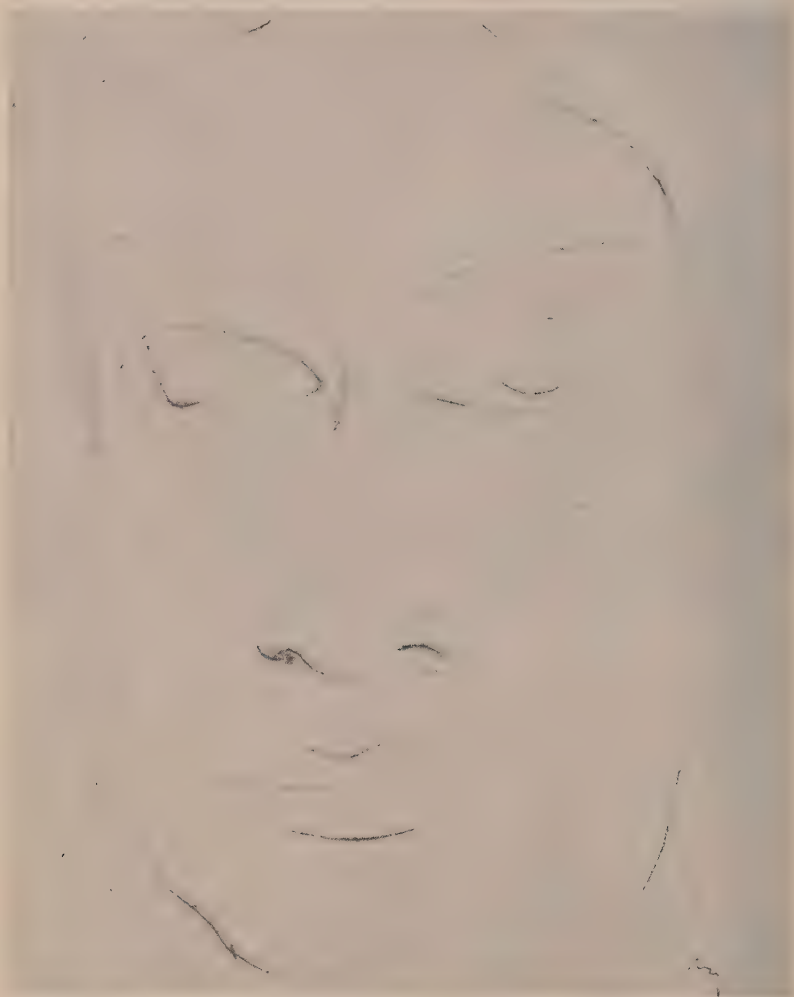
*'All but me
Under the sea!'*

And take this other ring for your left thumb, and if the first ring does not help you, twist this one three times, crying

*'All but I
Up in the sky!'*



Mark Tobey—Forms Follow Man



Mark Tobey—Face

And since your fair-locked head may still be troubled to stay upon your shoulders, but tie one end of this golden thread to your belt, and the other to your hair, and you could not lose your head even though sunlight shown between neck and chin."

King Arnal thanked his wife of many virtues, kissed her lovingly, and took himself off to the home of the Ogre of the Burning Mountain. All the long day he followed his feet along the highroad, and, as the sun slipped away, the road ended on the shores of a broad wave-stirred sea, where he lay himself down for rest. But no sooner had his lids slid over his eyes than he heard someone crying "Help me, Arnal!" He ran to the wave-set sand, and there saw a great shark, the largest eyes could see, gasping, and crying out. In the flick of a bee's wings Arnal twisted three times the ring on his right thumb, crying

*"All but me
Under the sea!"*

The shark swam away, but over its shoulder called "The Shark is your enemy's enemy, Good King Arnal."

On the second day Arnal again took to his journey, but now on a trail, for only giants and fairies came to this land. And now the sun was on his right, and now it was over his head, and now it was on his left, and it was time to take sleep. But no sooner had he measured his legs on the grass of the forest than he heard someone calling "Help me, Arnal!" Looking about, he saw a great eagle, the largest eyes could see, and it was in a strong-barred cage. In half the time it takes to say it, he twisted three times the ring on his left thumb, crying

*"All but I
Up in the sky!"*

The eagle flew away, but over its shoulder called "The Eagle is your enemy's enemy, Good King Arnal."

On the third day Arnal entered the mountains, and now he walked in forested valleys, and now on meadowed ridges, and now on lichen-black rock crags, and as the sun rolled over the edge of the world he lay down for rest, which he much needed, for he was near the Burning Mountain of the Ogre, and could see its red flames licking at the night sky. But he had not dreamed half a dream when he heard a voice crying "Help me, Arnal!" He arose, and on a rock lay a great jewel-handled sword, the finest eye could see, but all its blade was rusted brown. Arnal could not see how he might help a rusted sword, for he had no oil to clean it with, till the sword said "Only a king's blood will clean my blade." Arnal bethought himself of the golden thread, tied one end to his belt, and one end to his hair, and said "Strike off my head, Sword." And when Arnal's head was off his shoulders he picked it up and placed it back, and all was well. The sword was now bright as a winter star, and it said, "The Sword is your enemy's enemy, Good King Arnal. Try me and I will not fail."

Arnal was happy at heart to have such a fine air-cleaver, and he determined to go this very night to the Burning Mountain and steal the Ogre's

horse. Thrice a thousand steps he took, climbing by his fingers up cliffs, sliding down red-glowing snowfields, while the flames of the Burning Mountain ate higher into the sky, and shrill hot winds began to blow, and the fire-roar grew louder, and now he was at the very base of the Burning Mountain, where the rocks glowed dull red and the Ogre's chained slaves screamed in agony. As he climbed the slope, his feet scorched and his skin blistered, he saw a gaping black hole in the side of the mountain, and within the black mouth saw fire-shadows flickering on the walls, and red smoke writhing about the roof.

As he lingered in doubt, coughing from stinking smoke and panting for clean air, he heard the Ogre's mountain-shaking laughter, a stifled soul-scream of terror, and then the crunching of bones. Arnal, crouching down, followed the whispering shadows into the cave. Many heart-beats he cat-crawled, and came to a vast hall, and at its edge, in a shadow, paused. In the center of the hall was a great hungry fire which roared as a thousand charging griffins, and sent its fast biting flames high through the center of the mountain, and yet higher, scorching the stars. By the fire sat the greatest orge that eye could see, with sweat-glistening skin and three beards of shredded iron, one for each of his three heads. And there he was, roaring and rolling his six eyes, and in the left hand were a score of men and women which his right hand was feeding to his three heavy-crunching jaws, full of boulders for teeth. Arnal saw this, and saw, too, tethered in a corner, the Horse.

The Ogre stuffed the last screaming man into his mouth, and his three heads looked at each other. One roared, "Is that all?" Another roared "Yes, brother, that's all." And the third roared "But my stomach rumbles yet." And the others answered, "Yes, and *our* stomach rumbles yet." "We're still hungry, brothers," replied the third. "Hark!" roared the first. "I hear a mortal sneezing!" "And I," roared the second, hear a mortal coughing!" "And I, roared the third, "hear a mortal panting!" At this the Ogre shook the soul of the earth looming to his feet, and Arnal came forth to meet him.

"You are a false father-in-law, Ogre," he cried, "If you give me not that horse of yours!"

"And you are a false son-in-law," roared the three heads, "if you do not crawl into our stomach!"

The Ogre stomped forward, quaking the earth at each step, his steel-haired arms reaching out, and one head bellowing, and one head screaming, and one head laughing. And as the blood-smeared hands closed around him, Arnal twisted three times the ring on his right thumb, crying

*"All but me
Under the sea!"*

In one breath the Ogre was seized by magic air-hands, lifted through the flame of the Burning Mountain, and dropped into the sea. So much water did he splash, and so far, that the fire of the Burning Mountain was killed in one great hiss of steam. But Arnal felt the shaking of the earth, and the sea-dripping Ogre came back down through the mountain, though now one head was gone for the shark had taken it off.

"One brother gone, but two brothers left!" roared one of the heads. "One brother gone, but two brothers yet hungry!" roared the other. Again the Ogre stomped toward Arnal, who twisted the ring on his left thumb, crying

*"All but I
Up in the sky!"*

In one rush of wind the Ogre soared out of the mountain again, high into the heavens, knocking the stars about the sky like marbles as he flew. Arnal began to think his soul-testing over, till of a sudden the great monster dropped back into the hall, into the ashes of the fire, now with another head gone, for the Eagle had taken it off.

"Two brothers gone, but one brother left!" he roared. "Son-in-law's crafty, but stomach's still hungry! The fire put out but my sword's still strong!" The Ogre grasped a huge fire-red sword from its hanging-place on the wall, whirled it thrice about his head, the air clapping together behind with the storm-sound of the greatest thunder, and swung at Arnal's head. The bone-biter flew true and the wind was between Arnal's neck and chin. The Ogre's one remaining head shrieked, laughed, and bellowed, and took his great legs after the rolling head, for he meant to eat it as one might a pickled onion. And Arnal was wildered, for though the golden thread saved his life, he could not see to fight, for his eyes were far from his arms.

Then spoke the Sword, crying "Trust me, Good King Arnal!" Thus gladdened, Arnal swung with all the strength of his arm, and his good sun-flasher bit through the Ogre's neck and let his head fall with a great "thud!" to the ground.

His troubles over, Arnal recovered his head, took the Ogre's magic horse, freed the Ogre's slaves from their chains, and made his way home. As he entered his kingdom he saw that misfortune was there, for no birds flew, no fish swam, and no crops grew. And he remembered that for six days he had not fallen from his horse in the square, and asked the Horse for speed. Speed he asked, speed he got, in the soul of an instant he galloped into the square, where his people were mourning, for they thought surely he was dead. Arnal spurred his horse harshly, it bucked and squirmed, and Arnal was thrown to the ground. But he might have been a glass-boned crone and not been hurt, for the horse he had stolen from the Ogre was no higher than a dog, and great joy was in his heart.

"Long live the king!" cried his joyous people. "Long live Good King Arnal!"

A happy throng of birds speckled the ground with shadows, singing right sprightly, and a great school of fish flashed in the sunlight above the waters of the river, and the withered stalks of corn in the fields grew straight and green.

From this time on King Arnal and his people had not a thing to rub against their hearts, for birds flew, fish swam, corn grew, and none but the old died. Arnal lived to be an old man, falling off his horse each day, amid the cheers of his loving people, without the merest bruise. He had great joy in his people and his queen and his many children, and if he has not died since, is living yet.

JESS H. CLOUD—

Six Views In A Mirror

*Six drums in a liquid field,
The turning spits of recognition,
As charcoal sketches leap in glass
(And sleep, must sleep, can't sleep)*

*Explore tramuatic sky over slow earth
Where fires chart my flesh:
Chin, eyes and floating hair
Descending through magnetic night
(Like gazelle among the tower lamps)
To varied mansions of split-sight.*

The Man With a Secret World

*Crustacean ballet blazes under lids
(As traffic whines like slow-drawn chalk)
And heads are hunchback shadows.
Against the piercing real . . .
Yet I, elusive, lone
In speedway glaze
Run amidst the ragged scenes
(Although the dead beat time
To folk songs in my brain.)*

*While dresses stiffly stand,
Slip terror into pockets,
When I wildly swerve past falling cliffs,
Hear horns imprisoned in the tunnels
(Where automatic faces ache the blues)
And I converse with splintered masks
recanting youth.*

*In lustrous world percussion filters
Through the shell-white limbs:
Am hero in atonic dream
And grasp the fabulous (the rose-red wig)
To stare into these sensual tatters:
So love, a browsing Pygmalion
(mumbling back the praises)
Isolates the brain in guttural skies
And I must watch these woodcuts
Vanish beyond my hydra-eyes.*

The Aggressive Spirit

Opaque the pavement blocks,
(The cold facades straddle sleepless)
Breeding newsprint shadows
In an iron autumn:
While still life yawns,
The slender and the psychiatric
Scan these fatal ciphers
And spasmodically dance
Round mildewed street lamps
Gleaming with articulate death.
Yet no eclipse can void my hands
Or gut my tongue
As I in edgeless anger climb
(The ladder dreams with Mozart)
From the scrawny vats of time
To link this gentian-taste
With such dim-burning salients
That stare within my heart.

The Lover

Somnambulists will blink with love
As I, slow-fevered, cling to ragtime
In her fibrous eyes: dissonance, soft,

Her restless moods are steeped,
Cheekbones constant with unquiet
(Ghost-oval swaying in my fingers)
When thin arms slip from veins
To glances and I swiftly scrawl
The inexplicable on fleeting walls.

Still jazz unravels pulse
The frowning hands and ancient lips
(Imperfectly wired to passion)
Move through dissonant dark,
Brushing yellow flares of fantasy
(Cold neon skeins reweave) traversing
Careless miles to whiteway love.

I hang my warmth on a toxic tree
(Though dandelions and effervescent ads
Secrete the drunken lights
Through turnstile young)

*And snap the heads that stutter fear
From her resinous body: unweeping*

*She combs her hair with grace
To sensitize this arc of flesh
On retina of intricate now:
No plunge into illusion's camera-poise
Imprinting thighs on hidden negatives,
But high-speed waking in crystal eyes
Revealing x-ray shadows of my love.*

The Friend and Confidante

*Skis are buried in this winter
When that white idiot: conscience
Like flower floats on pain
And brittle doorways hold the images
Wherein we meet our snow-lost selves.
In living rooms
I listen to the comparable hearts
Chant dialogues of childhood river-walks
And hope-motifs, then sex,
A flagpole in a flooded countryside:
(Deflocculated dreams from haunted tongues)*

*And I am comic strip among the daffodils.
Still the ripe thousands caress joy
As an infrequent apparition,
Costumes discarded in an attic corner
That inherits our artichoke minds,
And crowded figures dance
To roundelays from microphones
While iridescence mutely ends in cellars,
Yet I beneath their intimate lives
Touch blood-clots that dam
Our headlined flesh and burn
Through waterfall of truth.*

The Undecided

*I hang in the hollows of hope
With youth crumbling in this time
Bituminous, fragrant with death:
Blind-drunk opponents sing
The broken jingles that echo sex,
(Flat-noses grotesque, sleep-ridden hands
and bulky thighs)
As pale stars are splintered, ache,
Descending in an old season.*

*Shall I play midst sprightly harpsichords
Or touch my faith to angular guns,
Suck wildberries or castigate my love
With scorpion fingers of regret?
Detach the ack-ack and barrage balloons
From schizophrenic sight that drips
As wheat into an odd-shaped future,
Though graven in smoke and radial nights,
The world's chatter rains on rocks
Quiescent with miracles and is re-served
Like lean dishes summoning
The substance of our harsh hearts.*

The Artist

*. . . a Figaro to the satyrs,
Denuded in a chasm where the indiscoverable
On lips breaking through sand-torn lights
Lies poised between the chlorine dark
And chamber music.*

*Though fond of tangerines
And themes con variazione of the pure,
I somersault from ferrous spires
To the wounded, circling the particular death
Or tensile fugue they vivify*

*In diagonals of a white and passionate art.
Eviscerating slumber, mortars fly
Through angry breakfasts and faded windows
Like metaphysical dilemmas riding
Wild along the housetops,
As inner architecture gestures
Woman courting streets with child,
Tight shawls in summer and flat-held hunger
Coursing through the silent plays
Each mumbles while awake.*



CARLOS BULOSAN—A Virgin for Cousin Pedro

Cousin Pedro walked rapidly between the coconut trees and climbed over the fence of our back yard. He stood under the kitchen window for a while, listening to our conversation in the house. Then he climbed the ladder and pushed the door of the living room. There was a great amazement in his face, but his eyes were withdrawn and sad.

"Is Uncle Simeon in the house, Aunt Marta?" Pedro asked Mother, looking around the room with anticipation.

"Your uncle is not in the house, Pedro," Mother said. "Where is your father, son?"

"Father is in the public market," I said. "I saw him there this morning."

"What is he doing there, boy?" Mother asked.

"He is just standing at the gate spreading his eyes left and right," I said.

"Is there anything I can do for you, nephew?" Mother asked Pedro.

"Well, there is, Aunt Marta," Pedro said. "But my problem is something that concerns men only. Uncle Simeon is the man who can help me."

"Take Pedro to your father, son," Mother said to me.

"Let's run like hell, cousin," Pedro said.

We climbed down the ladder and jumped over the gate. We started running furiously down the road and the peasants from the villages moved out of our way. My cousin was taller than I, but I was faster. I had chased wild boars in the mountains and forests. Some of the peasants put down their loads and watched us racing through the crowd. When we arrived at the market, Father was still standing at the gate. My cousin plopped like a log at his feet.

"What is all this excitement about?" Father asked, helping my cousin to his feet.

"I want a virgin, Uncle Simeon," Pedro said, gasping for breath. "I want a virgin bride, that's what."

Father stepped back three paces. He wanted to laugh, but his hand flew to his mouth. The laugh was stifled in his mouth, and the sound that came out was like the cough of a tubercular. It was the first time that a member of our family had expressed that particular request regarding the choosing of a wife. Father's composure came back as suddenly as his surprise had appeared in his face.

"A virgin girl for a wife, nephew?" he said. "Why this spectacular interest in the phenomenal virtue of the female of the species?"

"Well, a virgin bride is more godly than anything else," Pedro. "Isn't that so, Uncle Simeon?"

"Well yes," Father said contemplatively.

"I'll give you anything if you can get me a virgin bride," Pedro said.

"Well, now," Father said, screwing up his eyes. "You have a wonderful idea. As a matter of fact," he winked at me slyly again, "it's not a bad idea at all!"

"Do you think there are virgins around here, Father?" I asked.

Father was watching the women. He spread his eyes in the market. There were many peasant girls selling vegetables behind the merchants' booths. The

town girls were going around the square with tiny baskets under their arms. Some of the school girls were eating ice cream in the ice parlor. The older women were squatting in the dust, shouting their wares to the passersby. The daughters of the rich families were going around the drygoods stalls with their servants; then they went to the vegetables stands and poked viciously at the tomatoes and eggplants with their walking sticks. It was a trick they had always played on the poor women, who depended on what they could sell in the public market for a livelihood. They could not say anything to the elegant ladies of the better families because they were afraid to raise their voices. The better families made the laws and controlled the people like a tyrant. The peasants and the other poor people could not do anything. They worked hard and bought candles with their hard-earned money and gave most of what was left to the priest. Prayer was their only consolation. They just sat in the dust and watched the wives and daughters of the rich families poke at the tomatoes and other vegetables with their dirty walking sticks. When the rich and civilized women were gone, the poor women picked up the ruined vegetables and cleaned them with their skirts. Because nobody wanted to buy the vegetables, the poor women ate them. They wanted to save everything because their husbands had worked in the sun and in the rain to raise the vegetables. They never made money; sometimes it was only ten *centavos* a day. But they went to the public market from day to day, shouting their wares and waiting for the elegant ladies to pass by.

"Do you see any virgins, Uncle Simeon?" Pedro asked.

"To tell you the truth, nephew," Father said, "there are probably several virgins here. But how to determine their chastity is a biological problem."

"Can't you tell by just looking at them, Father?" I asked.

"Maybe and maybe not," Father said.

"Why don't we go around and look the women over?" Pedro said.

We went to the booths where Hindus were selling cloths. There were several elegant ladies there bargaining with them. When I saw the daughter of the judge, I touched Father and pointed to her.

"Maybe she is a virgin," I whispered.

"I don't think so, son," Father said, looking at the girl up and down.

"No, she is not a virgin at all."

"I like her saintlike looks," Pedro said. "Virginity goes with saintliness."

"She is definitely not a virgin, nephew," Father said.

"Why do you think she is not a virgin?" Pedro asked.

"Her legs are too wide apart." Father said, appraising the girl like a cow. "That physiological deformity definitely indicates something. It can't be concealed even from the scrutiny of the layman."

"It's true that her legs are too wide apart," Pedro said seriously. "But maybe she was carried on the voluminous hip of some nursemaid when she was a baby."

"I tell you she is not a virgin!" Father shouted with some finality.

We walked on to the other side of the market. Pedro looked back; there was a big lump in his throat. We went to the meat dealers where the older women were grabbing the meat off the racks and clawing at it with their dirty fingers. The dealers just sat easily and sleepily on their stools.

"I don't think there are any virgins here," Pedro said with sadness.

"That's where you are absolutely wrong, nephew," Father said. "There are more virgins among these older women than anywhere else in our town."

"I want a young virgin bride," Pedro said. "However, I will submit to reason."

"Look around, nephew," Father said. "There are many nice virgins here to choose from. Take your time."

Pedro walked around the racks, but there was perplexity on his face. Now and then he stopped behind a woman, looking her up and down. But he was not sure. He stopped in front of another woman, sizing her up; he examined her ears and mouth. Father saw that my cousin was measuring women from the wrong angle.

"That's not the way to appraise a woman," Father said. "A woman is like a cow. Look at her from a maternal criterion—or shall I say breeding potentialities? Watch the spread of her hips. The suppleness of her underbelly. The contours of the breasts—for procreative provicities, understand? Are her legs strong and powerful, yet pliant and gentle? We must not speak of probabilities, but possibilities. That is all, Pedro."

"You have just made a fine speech on the function of women, Father," I said.

"Son," Father said to me, putting his hand on my face, "women are always a very inspiring subject. There is nothing organically more stimulating than the thought of women. You must remember everything I say because in the days to come women will make your life a volvano of pain and worry. However, you must approach them only from their every day usefulness. That is all, boy."

"You said it, Uncle Simeon," Pedro said.

"I'm not so sure," I said.

"Now take your choice from these older female of the species, nephew," Father said, looking at the women again.

"I don't find anybody I like in this crowd," Pedro said.

"In choosing a wife the ornamental qualities must not supersede the maternal possibilities," Father said. "I'm alarmed at your ignorance of the subject, Pedro. But it's your own life and death."

We walked away from the meat dealers. When we approached the ice cream booth, the school girls pointed at me and laughed. They pointed at my long hair that was tied into a knot at the back of my head. We went to the gate and stood there till the sun went down.

My cousin was very disappointed. He went home in great dejection. Father came home only when the last woman had left the market. Then early in the morning he was at the gate again. He was looking for a virgin for my cousin. So from day to day he stood at the gate watching the women, but every hour that passed made him more dejected than ever.

I saw him standing behind the school girls several times. He walked around them and made several attempts to talk to them. But he was not brave enough to reveal what was in his mind. Then one day I found my cousin wandering in the river and brought him to the public market.

When Father saw that Pedro was with us again, he approached a school girl with big round hips. The other school girls made way for him to the

ice cream man. They thought that Father wanted some ice cream. Father stopped in front of the girl with big round hips and touched her hand.

"What do you want, old man?" the girl asked.

"I want to know if you are a —" Father stopped and looked at my cousin.

Pedro was smiling and winking at him. At last Father gathered his courage.

"Are you a virgin?" he asked the girl.

The girl dropped her ice cream cone on the ground. "If you don't go away right now I'll call the police," she said.

"Girl," Father said softly, "what I have asked you is of supreme importance to my nephew."

"Go away!" she shouted. "Go away!"

The girls surrounded us with accusing fingers. The insulted girl slapped Father heavily across the face. The men who were standing by saw it. They came to the ice cream booth. Soon there was a large crowd milling around us. Everybody was excited. Then a policeman came with his gun.

"What is going on here?" he asked.

"This dirty old man insulted me," the girl said, pointing at Father.

The policeman held Father by the wrist. "What did you do to this little girl?" he asked.

"Ask her," Father said. "She will tell you if I did anything displeasing to her."

"What did he do to you?" the policeman asked the girl.

The girl was getting frantic. She looked at the crowd and then burst into tears. She put her face between her hands and sobbed like a baby. Finally she brushed away her tears and looked at the crowd again.

"I don't have all day," the policeman said. "What did the man do to you?"

"The dirty old man asked me if I'm a virgin," she said.

The girls giggled. The men began to laugh. The older women frowned and rocked on their heels.

"What is wrong with that?" the policeman asked. "Are you a virgin or are you not? It is merely a biological inquiry."

The girl began to sob again.

The policeman said to the crowd, "That is the question, ladies and gentlemen. I leave it to you."

An old man came forward and tried to touch the girl. She backed toward the wall of the ice cream booth.

"I would say she *is* a virgin," the old man said.

"How do you know she is a virgin?" the policeman asked. "Don't throw any pronunciamientos as if this place is a cockpit."

"Her cheeks are still rosy," the old man said. "Her lips are soft and a-blooming. And look at her breasts—are they not woman-size and full? I'm not mistaken in my calculations. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a virgin!"

The girl tried to cover herself with her hands. Every time the old man mentioned a part of her anatomy the hands leaped instinctively to hide it. She was frightened.

Another man came forward and appraised the girl. "I would say she is *not* a virgin," he said.

"Why do you say that?" the first man shouted in defiance.

"What do you mean by that remark?" the second man asked. "Do you doubt my judgment?"

"Take off your shirt and I'll show you what I mean," the first man said.

"Stand aside, people!" the second man said, unbuttoning his shirt.

The other man also unbuttoned his shirt. The policeman offered to take care of the shirts. The two men met in the center of the ring. Their hands leaped and their legs twirled. They breathed heavily. They were watching each other intently. Then like a flash of lightning one of them flew in the air and fell on the ground like a log. It was so fast that we did not know which of the men did the wonderful act. When the man in the dust turned about to show his face, we knew right away that it was the second man. He crawled on his knees to the first man.

"I think you are right," he said apologetically. "She is a virgin."

"That is the way to talk to your superior," the other man said. "Stand on your feet and tell these people that this little girl is a virgin."

The defeated man got up painfully and faced the crowd. "This little girl is a virgin," he said.

"Wowie!" the people shouted. "She is a virgin!"

"Are you satisfied now?" the policeman asked the girl.

"No!" she said.

The noise died instantly. The exultant people rocked on their heels.

"I don't understand, girl," the policeman said.

"I would like to be a virgin, all right," she said, crossing and uncrossing her fingers.

"Fine and dandy," the policeman said.

"But I'm *not* chaste any more," the girl said.

The policeman stepped back in great surprise. "Are you sure you know what you are saying?" he asked. "Watch your tongue, girl."

"Do you doubt my word for it?" she said, jumping to her feet.

The defeated man rose to his height and faced the other man, who had thrown him into the dust a while ago. Now he had sunk to the lowest level of defeat. He was shocked, not because of the girl's announcement that she was no longer a virgin, but because his judgment was wrong. He could not face the other man any more. The crowd began shouting again. The people wanted to see another fight. Father took my cousin's hand and led him away. I followed them immediately.

"You'd better change your plan, nephew," Father said.

"I had my heart set on a virgin bride," Pedro said.

"You would have lots of fun with a virgin bride, all right," Father said.

"But it's very difficult to tell whether a female of the species is chaste or not."

"I wish there would be a way of telling one from the other," I said.

"Marriage is a gamble, son," Father said to me. "You meet a woman in the course of your brief life and you think you'd like to marry her. All right, you marry her. Maybe she is a virgin, maybe she is not. That is why it's a risky proposition."

"I'll not marry till I find a virgin girl," Pedro said.

"Why not go to the Igorot women in the mountains?" Father said. "I've been told that there are many virgins among them. And they are easy to find because they wear bracelets."

"Let's go, cousin," Pedro said. "You've got to help me find a virgin bride."

"Don't come back till you find one, boys," Father said, winking slyly at me again.

LAWRENCE J. ZILLMAN— CLIFFORD A. PERRY—*The Golden Heresy*

Seattle, published by Louise Hawkins at the Sign of the Bookworm. 94 pp. \$2.50.

Mr. Perry accepts from a poem of AE the charge that youth shall hold "against the sceptered myth . . . the golden heresy of truth," and in poems that are for the most part fresh, vital and challenging he makes his contribution to that truth as he sees it. But if he carries the banners of truth they frequently whip lightly in the winds of his whimsy, and his volume is livened by smiles at his fellow men that somehow never become sneers.

Although these poems have been written during a period of years in which poetic obscurity has at times seemed a fetish, the author writes with a directness and clarity that are pleasant to meet. He proves by what he writes that novelty of thought and turn of phrase or idea mean far more to poetry than do typographical distortions or obfuscations of imagery. As a result one reads to enjoy and share a communication rather than to puzzle over meanings. This is to say that Mr. Perry's techniques are individual without being radical, and they stamp his poems with his personality. The reader feels that his is an independent voice and that if what he speaks is heresy it is grounded in a mature and balanced philosophy. A short poem will serve to illustrate these qualities:

If I give my soul to the Lord
Will you give your body to me?
Would my stated faith in the Word
Be worth such a courtesy?
I do not mean to offend—
Ah, you are indignant, I see,
But Helen, can you understand
My soul is as precious to me?

The Pacific Northwest has reason to welcome the appearance of *The Golden Heresy*, for we have had too few volumes of poetry in this region that offer a quality and a modern idiom such as may be found in this book. And it would be well to add that much of the praise is due the book because it is not narrowly regional: it sees life too clearly for such antiquated boundaries.